

State Legislature

Focused on Accountability

Accountability at the Missouri Department of Transportation took center stage for a time during the 2003 legislative session as state lawmakers approved legislation they believe will make the department more accountable. Several years of debate about MoDOT's accountability culminated in a new law that creates the Office of Transportation Inspector General and makes several changes to the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission.

The new law gives an external inspector general the authority to perform investigations, reviews, audits and other studies of MoDOT as well as and receive and investigate complaints.

The inspector general will report to and serve as executive director of the Joint Committee

on Legislative Oversight, a group of state representatives, senators and other officials who review

MoDOT's annual accountability report, which includes statewide transportation improvement plans and financial reports.

The new law also requires the oversight committee to meet two additional times per year to discuss transportation issues.

The legislation reorganizes the structure of the MHTC by staggering the terms of commissioners so that no more than two commission terms expire each year. Ultimately, appointments to the commission by the governor will be made by March 1 in odd-numbered years.

The law also changes the way the commission chairman and vice chairman are chosen. The

two members entering their final two years on the commission will serve in those positions. One member will serve as the chair and the other will serve as vice-chair. The following year the positions will be reversed. Previously,

the commission elected the chair and vice chair.

Another provision in the new law prohibits commissioners from participating in certain political activities. Commissioners appointed or reappointed after March 2004 cannot host or manage a political fundraiser or solicit funds for any candidate who is seeking a statewide or nationally elected office. They also cannot serve on the board or as the chairman of any political action committee or political party committee.

In addition, the legislation requires the director of MoDOT to present a state of transportation address to a joint session of the General Assembly by Feb. 15 each year.

The accountability legislation, in addition to MoDOT's regular audits, reviews, reports and other forms of oversight, make MoDOT the most accountable agency in state government.

